

Noninjury Visits to Emergency Departments

Asthma, upper respiratory conditions and abdominal or gastro-intestinal (GI) conditions are among the leading principal diagnoses made in emergency departments for adolescents 10–19 years of age. In 1995–97 these three groups of conditions accounted for 40 percent of all first-listed noninjury diagnoses for emergency department visits among adolescent males 10–19 years. In addition, female adolescents also had visits for sexually transmitted diseases and urinary tract infections, which together with the other three groups of conditions accounted for 50 percent of all noninjury (nonpregnancy-related) visits. Pregnancy-related conditions accounted for 5 percent of all female adolescent visits.

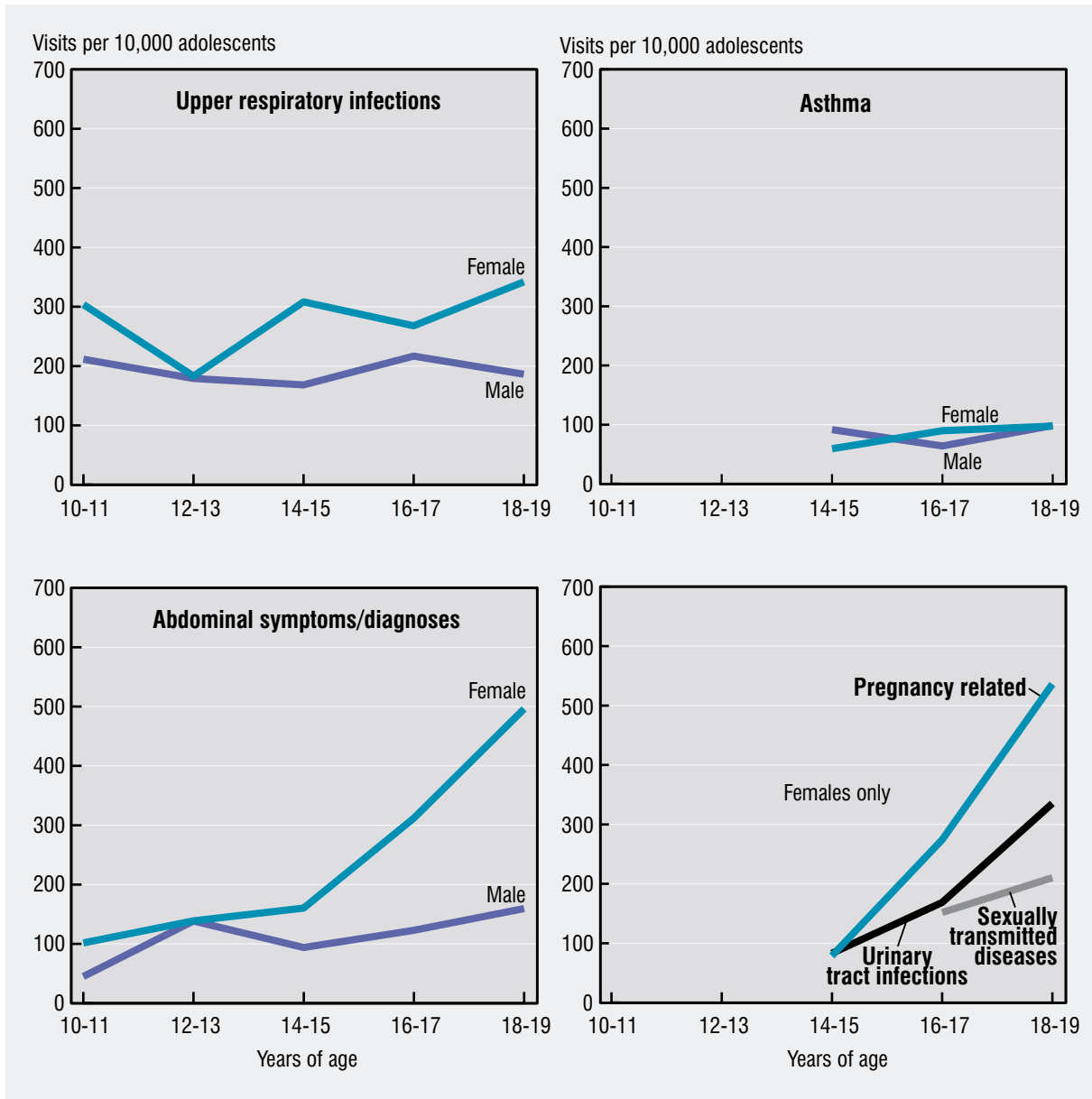
■ Upper respiratory conditions, predominantly colds, and ear infections, were the most common cause of noninjury-related emergency department visits among adolescents. The rate of emergency department visits for upper respiratory conditions was similar throughout the adolescent age range.

■ Emergency department visits for the treatment of asthma were approximately one-third as frequent as were visits for upper respiratory infections. The need for urgent treatment of asthma symptoms may be related to acute exposure to specific precipitating factors (for example, poor air quality and pets) or may be due to chronically suboptimal treatment of existing asthma. Visit rates for asthma did not vary by age or sex.

■ Nearly one-half of all emergency department visits for abdominal or GI conditions were due to stomach pains; another one-fourth were due to gastroenteritis and colitis. Among female adolescents, the visit rate for GI conditions increased with age and was almost 5 times as high for those 18–19 years of age as those 10–11 years. Visit rates among female adolescents were approximately twice the rate of their male counterparts, with the difference increasing with age.

■ Among female adolescents, the rate of emergency department visits for treatment of sexually transmitted diseases, urinary tract infections, and pregnancy-related conditions increased markedly with age. (See also figures 19 and 23.)

Figure 12. Emergency department visit rates for selected noninjury diagnoses among adolescents 10–19 years of age, by age and sex: United States, average annual 1995–97



NOTES: Data points are not shown in figure when rates are unreliable. See Technical Notes for discussion of emergency department visits. See also Appendix I, National Hospital Ambulatory Medical Care Survey. See Data Table for data points graphed.

SOURCE: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, National Hospital Ambulatory Medical Care Survey (NHAMCS).